

K.S.L.

BULLETIN OF THE KATE SHARPLEY LIBRARY NO.5 50P

DID KROPOTKIN SUPPORT WORLD WAR I?

It is commonly accepted that the Anarchist theoretician Peter Kropotkin did support the Allied cause in World War I. But is it true? Much is made of it by hostile Marxist critics (and was at the time) exaggerating the extent of whatever he said that might be so construed. It hastened the demise of mass support for Anarchism after the War. It still dismays pacifist or liberal cultists of anarchism as an historical abstract. Kropotkin would fit as their favourite anarchist but what could be more violent than supporting that particular war?

Yet in no positive sense did Kropotkin 'support' the war. He was not a 'recruiting sergeant' nor did he offer clarion cries, or do anything practical, even oratorical. Many Russian anti-Tsarists hoped or actively strove for a German victory in the belief it would lead to the overthrow of a barbarous regime. None of them supported, even in Russia, their own government and it was notorious that the Russian Court itself was pro-German, even during the war against Germany.

Kropotkin, despite his experiences in French prisons, had a high regard for British and French democratic institutions. But he did not confuse these with the governments of the day. He was alive to the bloody suppressions of the Commune and knowing how the Communards had suffered was sympathetic to the individual attempts of the anarchist fight-back at the bourgeoisie at the turn of the century. His distrust of Prussian

militarism was of long standing. Nothing that he said or wrote during the years of war leads one to the supposition that he *supported* it. What can be said about him is that he failed to *oppose* it.

His prevarications marked him out as different from (say) Malatesta or other anarchist theoreticians, who, like the movement generally, took a firm stand against their own governments or against those under which they lived in exile. Those who took stands for one or other of the warring powers were people who did not in peace time advocate insurrection or revolution, for example Max Nettlau or Jean Grave, or who in war time abandoned those principles. Kropotkin's stand was foreshadowed by his attitude to the Boer War and led to his being manipulated in the Great War.



He did not come out in open opposition to the Boer War, and told Emma Goldman at the time (as she records in 'Living My Life') that he did not think Russians who were 'guests' of Britain should do so, lest it prejudice the position of the Russian émigrés. This is an attitude that fails in an anarchist or even revolutionary perspective, but is understandable when one considers his position in bourgeois society. He was accepted not just as a 'guest' but an honoured one and he did not want to prejudice his position. As

it was his anarchism compromised him in the learned societies which respected him as a geographer or as a sociologist. This is made quite clear in his own autobiography 'Memoirs of a Revolutionist' when he speaks of his embarrassment at sitting when the Loyal Toast was given, with everyone else standing when the toast was the Kropotkin.

K.S.L.

Since resuming the KSL Bulletin we have brought out four numbers but it is some time since No.4. We have been preoccupied with completing the English-language catalogue of KSL - a task we greatly under-estimated - the next being the Spanish-language catalogue. The bulletin will resume occasional publication giving the update on the Library and occasional historical essays of fact and opinion.

There have been many individuals whom we must thank for donations of books and pamphlets, and among organisations we must single out Phoenix Press for substantial financial support also ASP publications; AK Distribution for donations of new books, Cienfuegos/Refract for older ones.

Unfortunately the notorious State-funded Institute in Amsterdam still clings to the British anarchist archives it obtained from the latter without charge on the pretext of photocopying them and refuses to disgorge while Freedom Press has preferred to place the archives it inherited from the movement either with Amsterdam or to American libraries via the London School of Economics.

In co-operation with AK of Edinburgh, London and San Francisco we are going into publication of books, first publications or not previously translated into English (such as Makhno's essays) covering unexplored aspects of anarchist history.

We were somewhat surprised to find such a wide demand for our pamphlet taken from Russian sources now opened up - 'Two Lies that Shook the World'. This dealt with the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and the Nationalisation of women in Russia. Someone somewhere seems to have given it a possibly unintentionally misleading review, as some of the enquiries have come from dodgy sounding sources, one certainly being a known Nazi who seems to think we're blood brothers (better keep that from Searchlight!) Maybe it's in part a spin off from the pseudo-Green Icke controversy.

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

The Kate Sharpley Library is an archive of books, pamphlets and ephemera on anarchism. It is not at present open to visitors but enquiries can be dealt with by post. A catalogue of its holdings is being prepared but this is a vast project. We are still looking for older books and pamphlets particularly from other countries, above all where dictatorships have caused such material to become rare. We have actually sent material for re-publication back to countries like Russia.

He was not in the position of being responsible to any anarchist organisation from which he could resign. Yet as a well known figure he had to say something, the prevailing attitudes being much sharper than during the South African war. He did not want to abandon the anarchist movement. The excuse he might have liked, that as a Russian exile living in a warring country allied to it he could not comment, would have labelled him 'pro-German' (as anti-Tsarists were assumed to be) and caused more horror than putting forward a revolutionary position. The Tsar overthrown, he returned to Russia.

The attitude Kropotkin wished to take in the anarchist movement was that as the idea of an international general strike had been proved utopian, and the working class had surrendered to chauvinism, libertarians should ignore the war as best they could, standing aloof and encouraging examples of international co-operation. In "Freedom" he wished to point to the Franco-German catering workers in London joining together to form kitchen co-operatives to alleviate the hardships both suffered when war broke out. The famous Christmas Day football match at the Western front would probably have been the next such example, but by that time he was forced out of the paper he had founded. Thomas Keell used his ambivalence as an excuse to accuse him of being "pro war" and take over the press. Kropotkin was pushed into the Jean Grave camp with those who took a more assertive attitude to the war, having given up hope in the working-class and proclaiming 'the people' instead.

A gentleman who was toasted by scientific societies, listened to respectfully by professors and tolerated as a distinguished guest by the scientific Establishment, did not feel able to swim against the stream.

Unfortunately many contemporary anarchists had made him a god and the trouble with being made a god is that it is hard to resign when you can't hide your feet of clay. The personality cult dogged the anarchist movement for years. Having denounced all leadership, it made intellectual leaders out of people incapable of sustaining such a role. This enabled it to be eclipsed by the Leninist movement, which made its personality cult out of leaders well able to implement such a role by political and military leadership. A popular French anarchist song of the day said 'there is no supreme saviour, neither god nor king nor leader'. To have added 'nor philosopher' would have spoiled the metre but saved the movement many setbacks.

AM

ANARCHISTS AGAINST HITLER

The Underground FAUD in the Rhineland

On 5th November 1937, Julius Nolden, a car plant worker from Duisburg was sentenced by the "The People's Court" in Berlin to a ten year prison term for "preparing an act of high treason with aggravating circumstances." Nolden had been at the head of the FAUD (anarcho-syndicalist Free Union of German Workers) in the Rhineland when that underground organisation was dismantled by the Gestapo in January 1937. Arrested with him were 88 other male and female anarcho-syndicalists who stood trial in the Rhineland in early 1938.

In 1921 the FAUD in Duisburg had around 5000 members. After then the numbers fell and by the time Adolf Hitler came to power in 1933, only a few tiny groups remained. For example, there were about 25 militants active in the Duisburg area and the Rhineland regional union had around 180-200 dues-paying members.

At its last regional congress, held in Erfurt in March 1932, the FAUD had decided that, in the event of the Nazis taking power, its federal bureau in Berlin would be shut down and replaced by an underground directorate (based in Erfurt) and that there would have to be a general strike by way of reply. The latter decision proved impracticable: for one thing, the FAUD right across Germany was decimated by a wave of arrests.

In April-May 1933, Dr. Gerhardt Wartenburg, before being obliged to flee the country, managed to find a replacement for himself as secretary of the FAUD in the person of Emil Zehner, an Erfurt blacksmith. Wartenburg fled to Holland, to Amsterdam, where he was welcomed along with other German émigrés, by the Dutch anarcho-syndicalist, Albert de Jong. Similarly, the IWA (the International Workers' Association embracing trade unions of a libertarian and revolutionary bent) secretariat was moved to the Netherlands but that did not prevent the organisation's archives from falling into the hands of the Nazis.

In autumn 1933, Emil Zehner was replaced by Ferdinand Gotze, a member of the Saxony Chamber of Labour, then run by Richard Thiede from Leipzig. Meanwhile in the autumn of 1934 Gotze, on the run from the Gestapo, turned up again in the west of Germany where support from the Dutch federation of the IWA (the NSV) had made it possible to establish an underground FAUD group. At the same time and in all haste an FAUD secretariat in exile had been set up in Amsterdam.

DUISBURG, THE LIAISON AND AGITATION CENTRE FOR THE WEST OF GERMANY

Up until the Nazis took power, labourer Franz Bungert had headed the Duisburg federation. He was interned in the Bogermoor concentration camp without any semblance of a trial in 1933. Bungert was released within a year but found it absolutely impossible to engage in even the least illegal activity because of the strict surveillance under which he was kept. His place was taken by Julius Nolden, a steelworker unemployed at the time. Up to that point, Nolden had been treasurer of the Rhineland Chamber of Labour. Nolden too was arrested by the Gestapo who suspected that his job with an incineration plant was a cover for illegal contacts with other FAUD members.

In June 1933, a little after he was released, Nolden met Karolus Heber, a member of the underground Erfurt directorate. The object of their meeting was to organise the clandestine escape of compromised colleagues to Holland and to launch a resistance organisation in the Rhineland and Rhur districts. Nolden and his colleagues laid the groundwork for a network to smuggle people out to Amsterdam and distributed antifascist propaganda. It transpires from the court records that anti-Nazi pamphlets circulating at the time under cover of the title "Eat German fruit and stay healthy", were so popular among miners that they used to greet each other with: "Have you eaten German fruit as well?"

After 1935 and the improving economic position inside the country, it was increasingly difficult to keep an illegal anarcho-syndicalist organisation afloat.

Many comrades had found work again after years of unemployment and casual labour and were reluctant to involve themselves in active resistance. The Gestapo terror did the rest. Furthermore, the support from Amsterdam dried up in 1935.

The outbreak of the Spanish revolution in 1936 gave a boost to anarcho-syndicalist activity inside Germany. Nolden built up his contacts with Duisburg, Dusseldorf and Cologne, organised meetings and launched subscriptions to raise financial support for the Spanish comrades. At the same time, Simon Wehre, from Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen), used the Rhineland Chamber of Labour's network to recruit volunteer technicians prepared to go to Spain. In December 1936, the Gestapo, thanks to a spy planted within, managed to uncover the existence of

groups in the cities of Munchengladbach, Dulken and Viersen. At the beginning of 1937, the political police rounded up 50 anarcho-syndicalists from Duisburg, Dusseldorf and Cologne. Nolden was among those arrested. A little later, further arrests were made and these brought the number of members of the outlawed FAUD in Gestapo clutches to 89. It took a year to build the case against them. These male and female comrades were charged with "preparing acts of high treason" and they were brought before the courts in January and February of 1938.

Only six were not convicted for lack of evidence. The rest were sentenced to terms ranging from several months to six years' imprisonment. Julius Nolden was committed to the Luttringhausen prison and remained there until the arrival of the Allies on 19 April 1945. On Pentecost Sunday of 1947, he met in Darmstadt with other comrades to establish the Federation of Libertarian Socialists (anarcho-syndicalists).

KILLING OF MILITANTS

Several comrades were murdered in prison. The Duisburg lathe-operator, Emil Mahnert, according to the testimony of four other inmates, was hurled from two storeys up by a police torturer. The bricklayer, Wilhelm Schmitz died in prison on 29 January 1944 and the circumstances of his death have never been properly clarified. Ernst Holtznagel was dispatched to the notorious 999 punishment battalion, where he was killed. Michael Delissen from Munchengladbach was beaten to death by the Gestapo in December 1936. Anton Rosinke from Dusseldorf was murdered in February 1937.

In August 1946, the Dusseldorf anarcho-syndicalist Ernst Binder wrote: *"Since mass resistance was not feasible in 1933, the finest members of the movement had to squander their energy in a hopeless guerrilla campaign. But if workers will draw from that painful experiment the lesson that only a united defence at the proper time is effective in the struggle against fascism, their sacrifices will not have been in vain."*

Trans PS

Lives Remembered -

Ambrose Barker and Ella Twynan

Ambrose Barker was active in the anarchist and atheist movements for 73 years. He came to London from Northamptonshire in 1878 to work as an assistant teacher at a Leyton Board school, joining the Stratford Branch of the National Secular Society. He broke away to form the Stratford Dialectical and Radical Club in 1880, at which Kropotkin spoke. Barker extended his vision from radical atheism to anarchism at an early date. Between 1910 and 1914 he was associated with the Walthamstow Syndicalists, who met in the Walthamstow Workingmen's Club, which still exists. Barker is remembered there both as Club Secretary and an anarchist.

Many of the Walthamstow Syndicalists were in the Horse Transport Union, an anarcho-syndicalist union (not a breakaway from the T&G, but a forerunner) which decayed with the trade itself.

Ambrose Barker helped John Turner and George Cores form the London Freedom Group (1930-36) and was involved in the Walthamstow Workingmen's Club 1892-1953 (Secretary until 1950) and wrote a book on its history. His companion Ella Twynan wrote several pamphlets for the NSS and was involved in the anarchist and anti-militarist movements. During World War I she was one of the international delegation which went to Sweden to discuss international socialist opposition to the war.

After Barker died she was involved with the NSS to a greater extent but came to the first meeting of the "Cuddon's" Group, which later became "Black Flag". It was she who suggested the name "Cuddon's Cosmopolitan review" after the paper published in 1861 by Ambrose Cuddon, jun., who she claimed was the first self-declared anarchist in Britain. A direct connection with the Chartist and Luddite movements, he welcomed Bakunin to London ("The Working Man" 1862, successor to CCR)

FROM A PEACE MUSEUM TO A HITLER BARRACKS

Ernst Friedrich (1894-1967), an Anarchist, founded the first international anti-war museum in Berlin (1923) as a testament to the German anti-militarist movement. He was conscious of the fact that the world was still thinking of Germany as irreconcilably militarist, despite the discrediting of the old Prussian aristocratic military state, and wanted to show many German workers had struggled against the military state. He also wanted in turn to show other German workers how vital that struggle was, and to demolish nationalist lies. The horrors of the war, on the front and at home, were overwhelmingly portrayed in his International Anti-War Museum at No. 29 Parochialstrasse, Berlin.

When the Nazis took power, they seized the museum, burned the exhibits and books and transformed the place into an SA-Heim (storm troopers' barracks). They could not wait for the necessary alterations to be made and overnight painted out the word "Anti" from the fascia and posted a guard on the door.

THE SAC (SWEDEN)

The development of anarcho-syndicalism in Sweden has been misunderstood or unknown in the international movement. We hope this year to reproduce an English summary of a definitive textbook of Swedish syndicalism. Meantime we publish a translated interview which gives some idea of its importance.

Q. What do the initials SAC stand for?

A. Svensk Arbetaren Centralorganisation, the central organisation of Swedish workers, a name that shows our desire to unite Swedish workers rather than negotiate hundreds of different contracts in different sections of the same industry, which the LO (Landorganisation, social-democratic union) does.

Q. What is the SAC's history?

A. At the beginning of the century, members of the LO influenced by the CGT (French revolutionary syndicalist union) left the LO to found the SAC in 1910. They believed many LO members would follow them, following the union's trend of class collaboration in the recent large strike. It was not until 1920 that the SAC became a mass organisation, in a period of intense class struggle in which the SAC was the only organisation in which the workers could decide for themselves their actions, demands and strikes. In other words, an organisation determined to wage the class war! During the Second World War, the powerful revolutionary unions of Germany, Spain, Italy, Argentina and Mexico were all destroyed by the fascists, only the Swedish organisation remained. Sweden was neutral during the war, and the SAC had a strong anti-militarist tradition, not to be confused with pacifism. Numerous SAC militants took part in the Spanish fight against Franco. After the war Sweden prospered due to its neutrality and the belief in class struggle was minimal in the SAC, being replaced by a belief in 'people'. This 'modernisation' was brought about by so-called anarchists. Opposed to this tendency was the Syndicalist League, which was organised as a political group. They were above all opposed to all forms of anarchism. During this time, the SAC in effect transformed itself into a smaller version of the LO - an insurance company that some people joined because subscription was cheaper in some areas than the LO.

When the events of 1968/69 occurred, no-one saw in the SAC any alternative to reformism, but the organisation was influenced by cultural changes and a drop in living standards during the seventies. People were looking for a truly democratic union controlled by its membership, that took ecological questions seriously and was determined to fight the bosses for better living standards. As a result, the SAC changed and is changing still, but there are

still members without much of an idea of what the organisation stands for. Of 15,000 members, there are two or three thousand activists and although membership has dropped slightly, the number of active members aged under 40 years has risen. Sweden has a population of 8 millions, with a million immigrants, half of whom are Finns.

Q. I've been told that important changes occurred at a recent conference?

A. Yes, but conferences are not the place where the organisation should be changed, but through day by day experience. Conferences are simply where we see how well we have done between times. The conferences in 1975 and 1979 were important because we returned to the declaration of revolutionary aims, that had been put aside in the 1950's. The constant rotation of elected delegates in the organisation for everyday tasks were brought about by conferences.

Q. What is the SAC's membership?

A. Many young people, whereas the LO spends large sums on publicity to attract young people to join. It is easier for them to join the SAC, because we accept them even if they only have summer work. All the same the SAC is more dynamic than the LO. The majority of the SAC activists joined fifteen years ago, and this 'new wave' is constantly being reactivated.

Traditionally the SAC was very strong in the building trade, mining and forestry. Other members worked as tram conductors or quarrymen, these occupations now hardly exist. On the other hand there is a boom in the furniture making industry in Stockholm and other large towns, due to people who came from the north where traditional industries have shut down.

Where the SAC has progressed furthest is where there was no solid tradition, such as the public service sector, social workers and health care. There is also an important transport federation. Forestry has always been an important area for the SAC, especially in the north-east above Stockholm where there are whole villages whose inhabitants are SAC members, often due to tradition, but some are very radical!

Q. Tell me about the SAC's organisational structure?

A. Each local branch has autonomy over its own affairs and works with others on equal terms. New national decisions are made at conference. We also have a central committee made up of delegates elected directly on a local basis which meets at least twice a year. There is also the executive committee elected by conference, that meets more or less every week.

Q. Doesn't this create a sort of electioneering? What is the limit to the individual promotion of militants?

A. It has never been a problem, it's only ever been a matter of a few columns in 'SAC Kontakt' (internal bulletin) with the results of elections held in localities. If someone carried out American-style electioneering they'd look ridiculous.

Q. You also have ballots before strikes?

4. Yes, one in the workplace and also by post for national situation. Of course activists are present, and influence on a local level, but all members have a say even if they have difficulty in coming to meetings for family reasons.

Another aspect is that we didn't have members paying by wage deductions. They must make the effort of sending their subs on time.

Q. Which strikes has the SAC organised recently?

A. The main problem is that large numbers of SAC members are isolated in their workplaces. Maybe half of the SAC is with us for ideological reasons, as well as there being many people who consider us as a union first, for legal, contract and dispute support.

In 1975, there was a big illegal strike in the forestry industry, the workers wanting to revise the levels of production. The SAC was the only organisation to support the strike, and SAC members were the only ones to have their wages paid during the conflict.

Q. What happened following the strike?

A. After the victory, things settled down.

Q. Are there disputes in the public services, hospitals?

A. Not many up to now. In fact we're in the process of having an agreement, as with the city of Stockholm, to start a strike, even if the agreement with the boss has not expired. Normally, the organisation would be in an illegal position.

Q. What struggles are happening in the health sector?

A. There is a strong push from the government to privatise health care. What's more, the health workers' wages are low and there is unemployment.

Q. What is there to be said of the general level of workers in Sweden?

A. The official unemployment department says there is only 20%, but women in Sweden find work more easily than elsewhere in Europe. Internationally, we have long been second, but now are on the twelfth rung.

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

COMING SOON FROM KSL!

SANTILLAN: EARLY RECOLLECTIONS

ANARCHISTS AGAINST MUSSOLINI

ANARCHISTS AGAINST FRANCO IN POST WAR
SPAIN

IN CO-OPERATION WITH AK PRESS:

"I Couldn't Paint Golden Angels" the autobiography
of Albert Meltzer, due out November, 400 pp £13

The Essays of Nestor Makhno (December)
A Catalogue of the Archives of the Kate Sharpley
Library (New Year)

PUBLICATIONS OF THE KATE SHARPLEY LIBRARY

The pamphlets issued by the KSL are now as follows. They were intended for research into anarchist history but we intend to reprint them in a better format and offer them for sale for more general propaganda purposes. Some titles may be published in a more expensive manner as they will only have an appeal to academics.

George Cores

**RECOLLECTIONS OF ANARCHISTS IN THE
PAST** *Personal Reminiscences of British
Anarchists 1883-1939*

Albert Meltzer

FIRST FLIGHT - *The Origins of Anarcho-
Syndicalism in Britain*

David Nicoll

LIFE IN ENGLISH PRISONS (100 Years Ago) -
The Case of the Walsall Anarchists (1892)

Antonio Tellez

THE UNSUNG STRUGGLE *Resistance to
Franco 1939-51 (first in a series) The Plot to
Assassinate Franco from the air*

Wilf McCartney

DARE TO BE A DANIEL! *The life and struggle
of an agitator and the fight to free the catering
slaves in London's West End*

Odon Por

**THE ITALIAN GLASSBLOWERS TAKEOVER
OF 1910:** *Syndicalism in Action*

David Nicoll

THE WALSALL ANARCHIST TRIAL

Ossip Tsebry

MEMORIES OF A MAKHNOVIST PARTISAN
Stefan Anarkovic

**AGAINST THE GOD EMPEROR: THE
ANARCHIST HIGH TREASON TRIAL IN
JAPAN**

O. Alberola & A. Gransac

SPAIN 1962: *The last ditch fight against Franco*
TWO LIES THAT SHOOK THE WORLD: *The
Nationalisation of Women, the Protocols of the
Elders of Zion*

Nestor Makhno

MY VISIT TO THE KREMLIN

PAGES OF ITALIAN ANARCHIST HISTORY:
The Cervi Brothers volunteers in Barcelona

Tom Brown

BRITISH SYNDICALISM

**THE LIFESTYLE OF BUENAVENTURA
DURRUTI**

Richard Cleminson

**ANARCHISM, HISTORY AND SAME-SEX
IDEOLOGY**

All £1 each post free

Efim Yartchuk

**KRONSTADT IN THE RUSSIAN
REVOLUTION**

£3 post free